

Caltrans District 9 Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study July 15, 2004 Public Workshop Recap August 12, 2004

Meeting Attendees

Sixty-eight community members attended the Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study public workshop on July 15, 2004 (see attached for complete list of attendees). The workshop included representation from:

- Bishop residents
- City of Bishop
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- Local media
- Bishop Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses
- Bishop Indian Tribal Council
- Inyo County
- Bishop Airport

Project Meeting Team Attendees

- Brad Mettam, Caltrans
- Forest Becket, Caltrans
- Donna Holland, Caltrans
- Bryan Winzenread, Caltrans
- Ryan Dermody, Caltrans
- Bart Dela Cruz, Caltrans
- Jeff Jewett, Inyo County
- Melinda Posner, Jones & Stokes
- Maurice Chaney, Jones & Stokes

Public Workshop Purpose

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the current status of the study and to obtain input about what should be considered in Caltrans' evaluation of project alternatives. Key agenda items included:

- Overview of the study's purpose and history
- Results from the business mail survey conducted in June
- Status and future of Bishop Airport planning efforts
- Potential study alternatives and status of analysis
- Facilitated discussion to identify additional considerations for study alternatives
- Study Alternatives Breakout Stations

Welcome/Meeting Format

Melinda Posner welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the project team, Project Development Team member's present and elected officials who were in attendance.

Melinda looked for a show of hands of those who attended the public workshop in January; more than a third indicated that they did attend. Melinda also asked for a show of hands for how many attendees were residents and how many were business owners. The majority of meeting participants were residents; however, there were at least ten business owners in the audience.

Melinda reviewed the agenda and went over the ground rules. She also assured meeting participants that they would have a chance to provide comments during the facilitated discussion regarding the considerations of the study alternatives, on comment cards and at the study alternatives stations.

Formal Presentations

Project Background

Brad Mettam began the presentation by providing a quick overview and status of the study including:

- Study goals and objectives
- Public participation milestones
- Bishop traffic data
- Accident history

Airport Development Plans

Jeff Jewett from the Inyo County Public Works Department provided information about the potential commercial and industrial development at the airport. Jeff indicated that the county's airport master plan proposes a new terminal and additional business park land uses to accommodate future growth in airport services.

Traffic Modeling

Ryan Dermody was introduced to talk about the traffic model to be used for this study, as well as for future transportation planning efforts. Though still in the development stage, the model will be able to simulate existing traffic flows and patterns and assist in the evaluation of potential transportation solutions.

Truck Traffic and Business Survey

Brad discussed the issue of truck traffic in Bishop and, more specifically, along the US 395/Main Street corridor. Brad provided information about average daily truck movement in the Bishop area.

Brad then provided a brief summary of results from the business survey that was conducted in June. The survey is a follow-up to a public opinion survey directed at Bishop residents that was conducted late last year. The business-specific survey was designed to capture the specific interests of businesses along the corridor. More than 75 surveys were received from approximately 300 that were distributed via mail to businesses. Key findings include:

- **Top of mind transportation issue.** When asked their number one transportation issue, 39 percent of businesses indicated parking, followed by too many trucks (18 percent).

- **Top of mind transportation solution.** The most cited transportation solutions included improved parking, better options for non-motorized modes of transportation, development of a truck route, and improved local road network with additional connecting routes.
- **Strongest opposition to transportation solutions.** More than 50 percent of the businesses that responded indicated that they are opposed to an alternate route for through traffic. *(Brad indicated that any alternate route that is constructed might be designated (through the use of signs) as a truck route and require that through trucks utilize it; however, Caltrans cannot prohibit passenger vehicles from using it.)*
- **Downtown improvements.** Seventy-six percent of businesses are in favor of improving the look and feel of downtown, and about half would be supportive of paying for such improvements.

Alternatives Under Consideration

Brad provided information on the proposed study alternatives. The first step in the development and analysis of alternatives has been a review and “screening” by the Project Development Team. Caltrans has also been actively sharing and obtaining input about the proposed study alternatives with other key stakeholders such as the school district, tribal government, City of Bishop, Inyo County and others. Through this review, several early alternatives have been eliminated. He then mentioned some key considerations in the analysis that Caltrans has been using so far:

- Ability to meet study objectives
- Environmental impacts
- Cost
- Efficiency
- Land ownership and use
- Constructability

He reminded the meeting attendees that the key purpose of the meeting is to hear from the community about any additional considerations that should be evaluated through the study alternatives analysis.

Facilitated Discussion of Considerations Related to Study Alternatives

Melinda began the facilitated discussion to identify additional alternative considerations. Meeting attendees also shared questions and comments about other aspects of the study. The following are the comments and questions. They have been categorized by the following topics: bypass/alternate truck route, local circulation, streetscape enhancements and other.

(Q: Question, C: Comment, A: Answer)

Bypass/Alternate Truck Route

Brad reminded the group again that it is not possible to create a “trucks-only” route. However, there are measures that can be taken to discourage travel on the alternative route by non-trucks.

C: Don’t make it too easy for tourists to use bypass.

C: High community impact if there is a western bypass.

- C:** Look at further bypassed community cases/need for additional bypass studies in California to see what impacts resulted after a bypass was constructed.
- C:** Reroute trucks east toward airport.
- C:** Signage is important (if alternate route were constructed). For example, “Truck Route.” Signage to advertise local businesses in town is also important.
- C:** Western route goes through bird watching territory.
- C:** Western alignments do not address US 6 or airport access.
- C:** Western alignments increase noise near equestrian center.
- C:** Western alignments are attractive to bypass the community because they represent a shorter distance.
- C:** Western alignments offer the possibility for development in underdeveloped area.
- C:** Limit development/restrict land uses along alternate route/bypass to preserve downtown business district.
- C:** Do not want to see decreased business in downtown core. Business has decreased in Mojave/Blythe where bypass was constructed.
- C:** Conversely, economic studies should not be of similar communities, but should be completed for Bishop specifically.
- C:** Caution while comparing to other bypassed communities.
- C:** Less wear and tear for trucks if there were a bypass.
- Q:** How do you enforce trucks to take a bypass?
- A:** It is not possible to create a “trucks-only” route. However, there are measures, including signage, which can be taken to encourage truck travel on the alternative route. Likewise, signage can be used to discourage use of the truck route by non-trucks. Disincentives, such as the absence of services can be communicated to travelers.
- Q:** If a bypass were constructed, how would you address trucks needing to fuel?
- A:** Any truck needing fuel would enter town for such services, with no restrictions.

Q: Why is a bypass needed?

A: At this point a bypass is not needed. However, this study is intended to examine future traffic conditions over the next 20 years. We expect that some type of alternate route and associated improvements to the local road network may be needed in the future. A critical consideration for a future alternate route is to preserve right-of-way in advance of the need.

Q: What is the impact on the local economy if a bypass were implemented? Would like to see additional studies, including comparison of communities similar to Bishop.

A: If a bypass were constructed, there is potential for some impacts to the economy. There have been studies conducted to determine the economic impacts of alternative routes. However, no such studies have been conducted for this project. Caltrans plans to research this issue as well as review other studies that have been conducted to provide as much information about potential economic and other impacts as a result of the construction of an alternate route. One such study, conducted by the United States Chamber of Commerce, suggested that – overall – a bypass has little effect on a community, if the need for a bypass is warranted.

Q: How much positive economic impact do trucks bring to the economy?

A: We do not have information referring to truckers stopping in the community and spending money. However, considering the lack of parking opportunities in town, it is likely insignificant. There is certainly a deep economic dependence on trucks in Bishop concerning merchandise and goods that we require from elsewhere.

Local Circulation

C: Bottleneck at Wye Rd.

C: Decrease speed limits (to 25 MPH) from Brockman to Gherkin. (Similar to Minden/Garnerville).

C: Don't want to see speeds increase with the decrease in traffic volume (if a bypass was constructed and presence of trucks was decreased on Main Street).

C: Need for improved local circulation.

C: Need for safety at Brockman and Highway 395 – install flashing light to decrease speed.

Q: Can trucks be slowed down while going through town by speed enforcement, stoplights, etc.?

A: Yes, enforcement plays a large role in speed compliance for all vehicles. The look and feel of a transportation corridor (particularly Main Streets) also can transmit a subliminal message to the motorist to slow down. Although at this point, truck speeds have not been identified as an issue.

Q: Can residential streets become major streets if alternatives were made?

A: This is something Caltrans' is evaluating as it studies the proposed alignments and city circulation.

Streetscape Enhancements

C: Less congestion will enable community to be more attractive.

Q: Is it possible to have trees and other landscaping on Main Street? If not, why?

A: The City can apply for grant funding for landscaping projects and submit preliminary plans/designs for Caltrans review. However, with the current Main Street configuration there is insufficient space to plant trees or make any significant changes along the corridor.

Other

C: Bishop is a road town.

C: “Improved circulation” (as stated as a goal/objective) is too vague.

C: Some alternatives were not shown to reservation representatives.

Q: Truck counts from US 395 Reno down and back up US 6 – has it increased? Is there comparative data from past years?

A: We are not sure if this is an actual circuit used by trucks. Classification systems or technologies that differentiate types of vehicles are fairly new to this District. The information presented at the public meeting is some of the most accurate truck data we have. Unfortunately, specific truck data history is rarely available.

Informational Stations – Alternatives, Local Circulation, Traffic Modeling

Following the facilitated discussion, meeting attendees were encouraged to visit the five information stations including information on proposed alternatives, local circulation and traffic modeling. The booths were staffed with Caltrans representatives, complete with detailed display maps and other presentation materials to encourage a detailed review and provision of comments to the project team about study alternatives. Each station was equipped with flip charts and comment cards to record meeting participant input.

Comment Cards

Comment cards were received at the meeting, via first class mail, and through email.

Comments received as of July 27, 2004.

General

- The extension of Sierra Street to See Vee Lane would make a great improvement in access to the downtown area.
- Improvements within Bishop city limits, increasing traffic circulation should be completed in the near future. The bypass can be allowed a longer time frame. But 20 years is too long in any case.

- While some downtown merchants doubtless continue to oppose any sort of bypass, an accident in the downtown could easily force the closure of US 395 for an extended period and force a bypass.
- For safety reasons semis should not go through downtown Bishop. Safety should be primary. While some business would be lost as passenger vehicles also would take a bypass overall safety would be improved, traffic would be lighter and the downtown area would be both safer and quieter.
- Most of the people with negative comments will be dead (due to age) by the time we complete environmental studies on the possible routes!!!
- The Main Street experience in this town is horrible – the bypass is needed.
- I do think consideration should be given to the future tourist. Railroad between Laws and Bishop and avoiding grade crossings and all those complications. That railroad will probably enter Bishop at some point near Wye Road and Spruce Street.
- I strongly favor a truck bypass around Bishop which also RV trailers, etc. could use when they have no intention of stopping in Bishop. This would make stopping at businesses in Bishop easier, more pleasant and safer. Also the town would be more pedestrian friendly. One truck may have a traffic impact of several cars, same impact for pickups with trailers, RVs, etc. If DWP sells a conservation easement, you may be precluded from potential routes in the future.
- Great job. Very informative. I support all ideas that will improve traffic circulation and safety – even if it means more traffic on Keough Street! The best alternative would be to allow expansion of business areas to the alternate routes – competition for the downtown businesses.
- Your meeting was very interesting and well planned. I enjoyed hearing all the different questions and answers about the alternate truck route. At the next meeting will you please have more data about the truck counts both at night and daytime? Possibly at Wye Road and US 395 and US 6. Would it be possible to have the camera going 7 days a week, 24 hours a day? What is planned for Wye Road leading into the airport in the next year or so? Thank you!
- After attending Caltrans' second meeting, I must tell you that in 20 years into the future the same negative feedback from local business owners will be the same; fear from the loss of car traffic through the downtown area. The solution would be for Caltrans to go ahead with the bypass regardless of those who keep progress from Bishop and keep it a "road town."

Western Alternatives

- All western alignments meet traffic need if north connector or west bypass for US 6 is also constructed.

- Keep a western alignment viable even if it's not a preferred alternative – things may change later. I stop in Placerville every trip and so do tons of other travelers – the town is booming.
- Any alignment that does not address north Sierra Highway won't work.
- No way on the west route.
- Is it possible to open Warren Street for more local downtown traffic?
- Neither alignment addresses the issues (airport and Highway 6). (1W, 2W)

Eastern Alternatives

- I favor an eastern alignment for a truck route bypass of downtown Bishop. This would aid in serving future industrial development in the airport area as well as provide a more direct and efficient route for truckers to access US 6.
- Go for the eastern alignment with the blue route. (3E)
- Easterly bypasses will meet traffic needs if north connector or west bypass is also constructed.
- Route 3E would be best to relieve traffic downtown. Route 4E would be second choice. Route 5E and 6E would cause a slow down for through traffic to make a short turn. Both west routes should be eliminated to assist business in town by cutting off a shortcut around town. Hope there is a way to solve this problem in less than 10 years.
- I feel the truck route should definitely go east to the airport. It would be nice if some (not greedy) businessperson would put a truck fuel stop out that way.
- In my opinion the two bypass options on the eastside are clearly preferred. They give enhanced access to the airport, easy bypass around Bishop for trucks and would be unattractive to cars because it would be a longer commute.
- The best place to locate a truck route around Bishop is east of town. Tourists would still drive down Main Street and very likely stop. Truck access to the airport would be improved.
- First of all I wish to thank you and your team for an excellent presentation last Thursday evening regarding the traffic situation in Bishop and the alternative truck routes. It is very gratifying that you involve the community as you have.

I prefer the alternate route to the east and would like to put forth some reasons why the western alternative would not be a wise choice. First and foremost, the open area around South Barlow, Reata Rd., the equestrian center, and Mumy Lane is a quiet area used for walking, jogging, and biking by many, many people. It is an area we all use to renew ourselves and should not be disturbed by the roar of trucks passing by. Also, if

this western route is chosen, the north and southbound skiers will soon discover this speedy shortcut that eliminates the Main St. slowdown. They will certainly use it and bypass all the merchants in town. Not a desirable situation.

You mentioned that with our current budget situation it could possibly be some 20 years before some "truck route" is actually developed. I propose an idea that could give us a certain amount of relief immediately. You stated that the right lane or outer lane is 12 feet wide and the left lane or inner lane is 10 feet wide. This encourages the trucks to use the outer lane and creates a loud noise for folks on the sidewalk and in the stores. There is also more danger of a pedestrian-truck accident. If this situation is reversed with the inner lane being 12 feet and the highway is signed "Trucks use left lane", the noise and the danger of the trucks is moved farther away from the sidewalks. It would in fact be shielded and lessened by the automobiles in the outer lane. The "canyon effect" we currently have would be decreased. This method of moving traffic is now used very effectively by the communities of Gardnerville and Minden, NV. Hwy 395 is their main street also, but even worse than ours since it has two sharp turns and a school in the middle of town. They have more local traffic and a much longer main street business area. They seem to move trucks very effectively with this method. Have you given this method any thought for Bishop?

I trust you will continue to keep us posted as new considerations for the study alternatives arise. Thank you for having an open ear and mind.

Next Steps

Input received from the public meeting, comment cards, maps, etc. will be fully considered through Caltrans' analysis of the proposed study alternatives. Caltrans will be conducting a future public meeting to present the draft study conclusions and obtain comments on the preferred alternatives sometime early next year.

Attachments

List of meeting attendees.